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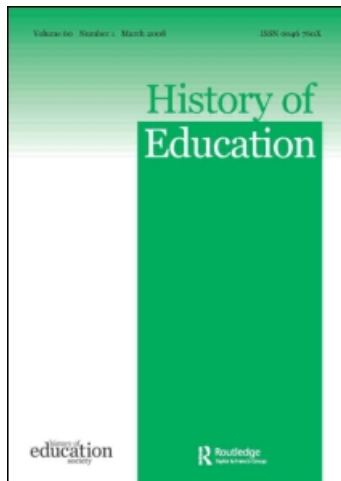
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History and National Identity Construction: The Great Famine in Irish and Ukrainian History Textbooks

Jan Germen Janmaat

This paper compares the narratives on the Famine in Irish and Ukrainian history textbooks and examines to what extent these narratives are coloured by a nationalist discourse. It argues that the story of the Famine in Irish history textbooks has changed from nationalist propaganda to a more balanced narrative, and that this change was brought about by the social transformations in the 1960s. The paper further observes that the current Ukrainian textbooks display quite a variation in the selection and interpretation of events relating to the Famine. Whereas some show a considerable nationalist bias, others present more moderate views. The trajectory of Irish narratives lends support to a theory that relates politicized historiography to the age of a state and to the consolidation of democracy. The diverse pattern of Ukrainian narratives, however, is difficult to reconcile with theories linking historiography to the wider social and political context. This pattern suggests that young states and/or states emerging from authoritarian rule need not automatically entertain uniformly nationalist or otherwise ideologically coloured discourses in the immediate post-independence period.

Introduction

Ethnocentric views and nationalist biases in textbooks are usually associated with the first half of the twentieth century when national rivalries dominated international affairs and fascist and authoritarian regimes controlled much of the European continent. Marsden, for example, notes that the glorification of war and the vilification of neighbouring states permeated the history and geography textbooks of Great Britain, France, the United States and Germany from the 1880s until the 1940s, despite efforts by the League of Nations to curb rampant chauvinism in textbooks in the interwar period.¹

¹ Marsden, William. E. “‘Poisoned History’: A Comparative Study of Nationalism, Propaganda and the Treatment War and Peace in the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century School Curriculum.” *History of Education*, 29 (2000): 29–47.

After the Second World War politicians and educators concluded that jingoism in textbooks must have contributed to the atrocities committed in the war. Consequently, supported by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, many countries began removing nationalist leanings from their curricula and textbooks.² Bilateral agreements were concluded and special commissions set up to identify and eliminate prejudice and stereotypes. Thematically, the emphasis shifted from national to international history and from political and military history with its tendency to praise national achievements and national heroes to socioeconomic and cultural issues and the daily life of the common person.³ In their pedagogical objectives, textbooks moved away from the infusion of values, identities and pre-digested, unquestioned knowledge to the promotion of critical thinking, independent analysis and problem-solving skills.

Great and unpleasant was the surprise, therefore, when nationalist leanings suddenly reappeared in the textbooks of many states in Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism. Some would argue that these nationalist colourings are typical of recently or newly independent states, which are generally eager to establish unity within their borders and, therefore, to prioritize nation-building over other concerns.⁴ Others would link the sudden rise of ethno-national sentiments (and their manifestation in textbooks) to the post-communist transition period, which caused considerable survival stress and left people without a moral compass. In this view nationalism filled the ideological vacuum that communism left behind.⁵ Both views seem to imply that nationalist rhetoric is something temporary, characteristic of the early post-independence years: as states grow older and a new social and moral order is established the political and emotional need for identity construction diminishes. This conjecture raises many interesting questions. Are the current historical narratives of new(ly) independent states comparable to those of relatively young West European states in the first few decades after their independence? Have the historical narratives in these West European states evolved from nationalist discourses to more moderate and balanced accounts? If this is the case, can specific factors or circumstances be identified which have triggered this change? Is it likely that the new(ly) independent states follow the same path of development or is

² In 1949 for example UNESCO published a programme for peace education that was intended as a model for school books to follow. See UNESCO, ed. *A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Aids to International Understanding*. Paris: UNESCO, 1949.

³ Berghahn, V. R. and H. Schissler. "Introduction: History Textbooks and Perceptions of the Past." In *Perceptions of History: International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States*, edited by V. R. Berghahn and H. Schissler. Oxford: Berg, 1987.

⁴ Coulby, David. "Educational responses to diversity within the state." In *World Yearbook of Education: Intercultural Education*, edited by D. Coulby, J. Gundara and C. Jones. London: Kogan Page, 1997; Carras, Costa. "Preface." In *Teaching the History of South-Eastern Europe*, edited by C. Koulouri. Thessaloniki: Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, 2001.

⁵ Ignatieff, Michael. *Blood and Belonging: A Journey into the New Nationalism*. London: Vintage, 1994; Snyder, Jack. "Nationalism and the crisis of the post-Soviet state." *Survival* 35 (1993): 5–26.

it improper to expect history to repeat itself because of changing historical circumstances?

These questions have informed the current study, which compares textbook narratives of Ireland—a young West European state—to those of Ukraine—a new independent post-Soviet state. Specifically it examines representations of the Irish and Ukrainian Famines in the history textbooks of the two countries and explores to what extent these portrayals are coloured by a nationalist discourse. It will track developments in these depictions by analysing successive generations of textbooks that have been in use since state independence. The fact that the two nations experienced the same kind of catastrophe when they were ruled by a foreign power (the United Kingdom in the Irish case, the Soviet Union in the Ukrainian case) is an interesting similarity.⁶ Have nationalists in both cases exploited the famines by arguing that the disaster is proof of the ill-willed posture of the foreign power towards their respective nations? Have they, by implication, asserted that the tragedy would not have occurred if their nations had been free from foreign domination?

There are other conspicuous parallels between the two nations. Historically, both the Irish and the Ukrainians were by and large peasant populations tilling lands held predominantly by a landlord class that differed from the peasantry in religion or ethnic descent. Their native languages (Irish and Ukrainian) were increasingly surpassed by the imperial languages English and Russian in the nineteenth century.

But there are also differences. Whereas Catholicism gradually came to be seen as synonymous with Irishness in nineteenth-century Ireland, Ukrainians had to fall back on language as the sole marker distinguishing them from Russians. Religion could not be used as a marker of identity as the majority of Ukrainians professed the same belief as their 'elder Slavic brethren'—Eastern Orthodoxy.⁷ Second, at the time the famines occurred—1846 in Ireland and 1933 in Ukraine—the political character of the ruling empires differed completely, with the British Empire exemplifying the classic *laissez-faire* state promoting market capitalism and free trade and the Soviet Union constituting the archetypical interventionist state exerting full control over economy and society.

⁶ From the Act of Union in 1800, which abolished the parliament in Dublin, to the proclamation of the Irish Free State, Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Soviet Union was formally a federal state with autonomous Union Republics, one of which was Ukraine. Formally these republics also had the right to leave the Union. In practice, however, the Soviet Union was a highly centralized state.

⁷ This argument has to be qualified somewhat as Ukraine now has several Orthodox churches all claiming to represent the community of Orthodox believers in Ukraine. A sizeable minority, concentrated in the western part of Ukraine, professes the Greek Catholic or Uniate religion.

The aims of this article are threefold: (1) to assess to what extent the portrayals of the famines in Irish and Ukrainian history textbooks are influenced by a nationalist discourse, (2) to examine changes in the strength of this discourse over time, and (3) to use the results of the analysis to explore the validity of several perspectives on the role of historical narratives in national identity construction. The article starts with a discussion of these perspectives. This is followed by a methodological section that discusses the identification of a nationalist bias and the selection of textbooks. Sections three and four are devoted to the analysis of Irish and Ukrainian textbooks, respectively. The concluding section matches the empirical findings with the aforementioned perspectives.

Perspectives on Historiography and National Identity Construction

The advantage of comparing Ireland and Ukraine is that it allows us to explore the validity of a number of perspectives from political science and history. These perspectives can inform and offer theoretical guidance to textbook studies and can link textbook narratives to wider social processes.

The first perspective sees nationalist historiography as a phenomenon that is characteristic of an ethnic illiberalism. According to Hans Kohn, the founder of this school of thought, ethnic nationalism looked to the past as a source of inspiration, seeing the nation as an eternal, natural and cultural entity defined by common historical experience, culture and descent. He contrasted this with a civic liberal nationalism that 'arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and the struggles of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past'.⁸ Kohn related the kind of nationalism to class structure: in societies with a strong bourgeoisie (America, Britain, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland) civic nationalism predominated; in traditional agrarian societies (Central and Eastern Europe) ethnic nationalism prevailed.⁹

It must be noted here that Kohn developed his theory in the interwar years, a period when authoritarian intolerant nationalisms triumphed in most parts of Europe. Nonetheless Kohn's theory can hardly be called outdated as it remained an influential theory in the postwar years, inspiring many scholars, journalists and policy-makers and fuelling a heated academic debate that continues to the present day.¹⁰ Although

⁸ Kohn, Hans. "Western and Eastern Nationalism." In *Nationalism*, edited by J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994: 164.

⁹ Kohn, Hans. *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

¹⁰ Well-known journalists and scholars influenced by Kohn's writings, for example, are Michael Ignatieff (see note 5), and Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. For scholars critical of the Kohn framework see Kymlicka, Will "Misunderstanding nationalism." In *Theorizing Nationalism*, edited by R. Beiner. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, and Shulman, Stephen "Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism." *Comparative Political Studies* 55 (2002): 554–85.

many of his followers interpreted his framework as a crude civic-West/ethnic-East divide,¹¹ Kohn himself also considered the periphery of Western Europe to be affected by ethnic nationalism, and Ireland in particular.¹² At this point it is relevant to ask how a nation and the image of itself will develop once ethnonationalism has taken root. Are ethnic nations doomed to stay ethnic and illiberal forever? As neither Kohn nor his followers satisfactorily addressed this question, I have no option but to interpret Kohn's framework as a static perspective, as a theory that assumes geographical variations in the understanding of a nationhood to be lasting. In relation to the current study, I infer the following prediction from it: *in both Ireland and Ukraine textbook narratives on the Famine are characterized by a constant nationalist bias since the establishment of state independence.*

Advancing a developmental model, T. Kuzio, a strong critic of Kohn, deals with the question of the static or changing nature of ethnic nations. Drawing on works by A. D. Smith and E. Kaufmann, he argues that both Eastern and Western nations rest on strong ethnic foundations.¹³ In Western states civic institutions and practices have been built on and become thoroughly intertwined with these foundations. In his evolutionary model the mix of civic and ethnic elements in a given state is related to the age of that state and to the development of democratic structures—i.e. the younger the state and the more fragile its democracy, the less opportunity it has had to develop civic structures and the more ethnic it still is. In other words, young states may start out by communicating an ethnic conception of the nation—with a concomitant stress on nationalist historiography—but they will gradually adopt more civic features, expressed in a gradual disappearance of the nationalist bias in history textbooks, as the state grows older. Kuzio's model thus echoes those who see nationalist historiography as a temporary phenomenon related to an initial phase of state and nation-building. *His model would predict that Ireland has gradually abandoned a nationalist account of its famine as it evolved from a traditional agrarian society to a modern democratic postindustrial state and that Ukraine can be expected to follow the same development as it grows older as an independent democratic state.*

¹¹ Plamenatz, John. "Two types of nationalism." In *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, edited by E. Kamenka. London: Edward Arnold, 1976; Velychenko, Stepan. *Shaping Identity in Eastern Europe and Russia: Soviet–Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History, 1914–1991*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. Velychenko for instance contends that nationalist sentiments are much stronger in the 'poorer, authoritarian' societies 'east of the Elbe' than in the 'wealthier, pluralist and constitutional societies' of the West, and that national historiography has emotive and even explosive potential in the former if it is deemed essential for group survival (ibid., 18).

¹² Kohn is not alone in seeing Irish nationalism developing in an ethno-cultural direction from the 1870s. See, for instance, Kissane, Bill. "Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland: A Comparative Analysis." *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 6 (2000): 25–42.

¹³ Kuzio, Taras. "The Myth of the Civic State: A Critical Survey of Hans Kohn's Framework for Understanding Nationalism." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25 (2002): 20–39; Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. London: Penguin, 1991; Kaufmann, Eric. "Ethnic or Civic Nation? Theorizing the American Case." *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 27 (2000): 133–55.

A third perspective relates the surge of ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet successor states to the particular experience with communism. Schöpflin for instance contends that communism destroyed civil society and the social fabric of communities, leaving people isolated and distrustful of the state. In these circumstances ethnonational identities were the only ones people could fall back on once communism had collapsed. As communism had also wiped out pluralism and views challenging the regime, a vigorous ethnic nationalism excluding oppositional voices had free play.¹⁴ Stepanenko argues along the same lines. He sees a 'genealogical relatedness' between post-Soviet Ukrainian historiography and its Soviet predecessor in a sense that both accounts of history 'affirm their single vision suppressing the other perspective'.¹⁵ *The perspective linking ethnic nationalism to the communist experience would predict different accounts of the famine, with Ukraine being likely to adopt a single nationalist narrative and Ireland prone to give neutral and diverse accounts of the famine from the establishment of the Irish Free State. The nationalist narratives in Ukraine can only be expected to change if democracy and pluralism firmly take root.*

Of course, a two case comparison allows only for a partial testing of the predictions of these models. Many more cases as well as different policy fields would have to be included in the analysis to arrive at a complete evaluation. Yet, the comparison can provide us with some preliminary insights.

Method of Analysis and Selection of Textbooks

For the current study it is crucial to establish what constitutes a nationalist bias and what constitutes a moderate approach in narratives of the famines. This study will use the consensus among historians on a particular topic as a benchmark. Accounts that depart significantly from this consensus in the selection and interpretation of events in favour of the titular group and at the expense of the out-group will be considered nationalist. Accounts that are in line with the consensus will be taken as moderate, neutral or even-handed. A problem that arises here is that the Ukrainian Famine, in contrast to the Irish one, is still a hotly discussed topic among historians. This is not surprising given that Ukrainian historians have only very recently (since 1991) been able to access sources and study the subject seriously. Yet on some crucial issues regarding the Famine a consensus has by and large emerged. Thus historians from various backgrounds (Western, Ukrainian, Ukrainian diaspora) would subscribe to the view that the Famine was not directed specifically at the Ukrainian *nation*, although they would see it as an instrument targeted at the Ukrainian *peasantry* in

¹⁴ Schöpflin, George. *Nations, Identity, Power*. London: Hurst & Company, 2000.

¹⁵ Stepanenko, Victor. *The Construction of Identity and School Policy in Ukraine*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1999: 113.

order to crush the latter's resistance to collectivization.¹⁶ The consensus on these issues will be used as a yardstick with which to evaluate narratives in Ukrainian textbooks.

Another methodological issue is the qualitative difference between the Irish and the Ukrainian Famine: whereas the former had natural causes, the latter was an artificial disaster, being the result of Stalin's collectivization campaign, and occurred in other parts of the Soviet Union as well. This means that the narratives of the two famines cannot be judged entirely by the same criteria to determine the degree of nationalist bias. For instance, Irish narratives attributing sole responsibility for the occurrence of the Famine to the British government are *not* in line with the consensus and hence *would* have a nationalist bias. Ukrainian narratives holding the Soviet regime exclusively responsible *do* reflect the consensus and therefore do *not* have a nationalist colouring. Sole responsibility will thus be used as a criterion only in the Irish case. In similar vein, a failure to mention that the Famine also occurred elsewhere *will* be interpreted as a bias in the Ukrainian case but *not* in the Irish case.¹⁷ However, apart from these differences there are a number of common criteria that apply in both cases. For this study I use the following to assess the degree of nationalist bias:

1. the depiction of the famine as an instrument of genocide (i.e. a policy designed for the physical extermination of the Irish or Ukrainian nation);
2. ethnic boundary-making to create an 'us-them' effect (e.g. labelling the British government and the landlords as 'English' or 'Protestant' in the Irish case; labelling the Soviet government and its agents in Ukraine as 'Russian' or 'Jewish'¹⁸);
3. depicting the in-group (the Irish and the Ukrainians) exclusively as victims and the out-group (the Russians, the English/Protestants) exclusively as perpetrators;
4. failing to mention the motivations the British and Soviet government had for their policies.

The next question that commands attention is the selection of textbooks for the analysis. The current study has tried to be as exhaustive as possible. For the Irish case this has proved difficult, however, as the Irish government from the very inception of the Irish Free State chose to continue the hands-off policy of its British predecessor regarding textbooks (see below). Consequently, no lists have been found of textbooks sanctioned by the Department of Education. Instead, this study relied on

¹⁶ Krawchenko, Bogdan. *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine*. London: Macmillan, 1985; Subtelny, Orest. *Ukraine: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994; Wilson, Andrew. *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. Wilson for instance labels the Ukrainian Famine as 'deliberate and brutal, but part of an ideological rather than a national war' (ibid., 145).

¹⁷ The potato blight also struck other parts of the British Isles and caused great hardship there (notably in Scotland), but mass starvation was narrowly avoided.

¹⁸ In addition to a rapidly growing Russian minority prewar Ukraine had a sizeable Jewish population of primarily urban dwellers.

the comprehensive selection of textbooks by Mulcahy for his study on the portrayal of English–Irish relations in Irish history textbooks. Mulcahy distinguished two generations of textbooks: the ‘purist’ ones that were used from independence until the end of the 1960s and which, in his view, stand out for their nationalist tone, anti-Englishness and black-and-white treatment of prominent characters, and the ‘moderate’ texts, which have been in use from the early 1970s to the present and which ‘are generally without such biases and present more neutral accounts of Irish history’.¹⁹ This study follows Mulcahy’s periodization.

I analysed the following textbooks of the first generation:

- Hayden, M., and G. A. Moonan. *A Short History of the Irish People from the Earliest Times to the 1920s*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1921.
- Gwynn, S. *The Student’s History of Ireland*. London: Longmans, Green, 1925.
- Carty, J. *A Junior History of Ireland*. London: Macmillan, 1933.
- Casserley, D. *History of Ireland*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1943.
- *The Educational History of Ireland: Part I*. Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland, 1947.

I analysed the following textbooks of the second generation:

- Moody, T. W., and F.X. Martin, eds. *The Course of Irish History*. Cork: Mercier Press, 1967.
- Tierney, M., and M. MacCurtain. *The Birth of Modern Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1969.
- Collins, M. E. *Ireland Three: Union to Present Day*. Dublin: Educational Company, 1972.
- Neill, K. *The Age of Steam and Steel*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976.
- Kirkpatrick, R. *The Nineteenth Century*. Dublin: Folens Publishers, 1980.
- Sobolewski, P., and J. McDonald. *Let’s Look at History Part 2: Exploring Change*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990.
- Brockie, G., and R. Walsh. *Focus on the Past: One-Volume Edition*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1997.

The attentive reader will have noticed that Irish-language textbooks are missing in this selection. It is quite possible that Irish-language history textbooks display a stronger nationalist colouring than their English-language counterparts since many of them have been published by the Christian Brothers, a teaching order feverishly committed to the Irish cause.²⁰ However, the number of pupils having studied from Irish-language textbooks is not likely to have been large. From the inception of the

¹⁹ Mulcahy, Brian J. “A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Text Books, Published Since 1922, and Dealing with the Period 1800 to the Present.” Ph.D. diss., University of Hull, 1988: 2. The two textbooks from the 1990s selected for the analysis (see below) were not part of Mulcahy’s study.

²⁰ O’Donoghue, Thomas A. *The Catholic Church and the Secondary School Curriculum in Ireland, 1922–1962*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Irish Free State, Irish fought an uphill battle against English, which continued to be the language of public life and remained the native language of the vast majority of the population. Even in the early postwar years when the state-endorsed Gaelicization campaign was at its peak, still only about a quarter of all secondary schools taught exclusively in Irish.²¹ Under these conditions the impact of Irish-language textbooks is likely to have been minimal, which is the primary reason for not including them in the analysis.

The selection of Ukrainian textbooks was more straightforward as the Ukrainian Ministry of Education to this day closely oversees the textbook writing, production and dissemination process (see below). As lists of officially recommended textbooks could be used, the selection of Ukrainian textbooks (*pidruchnyky*) for the current study is complete. The lists also mention supplementary books (the so-called *posibnyky*), but I decided not to include them in the analysis as schools are not required to use them.

I analysed the following books of the first generation (1993–1996):²²

- Kucheruk, O. *Opovidannia z Istorii Ukrainy* (A Tale about the History of Ukraine). Kyiv: Osvita, 1993 (5th grade).
- Kul'chytskyi, S. V., Y. Kurnosov, and M. V. Koval'. *Istoriia Ukrainy* (History of Ukraine). Kyiv: Osvita, 1994, (10th grade).
- Turchenko, F. H. *Noveishaia Istoriia Ukrainy: Chast' Pervaia 1917–1945* (Modern history of Ukraine: Part one 1917–1945). Kyiv: Heneza, 1995, (10th grade).

I analysed the following books of the second generation (1999–2003):²³

- Misan, V. *Opovidannia z Istorii Ukrainy, 5 klas* (A Tale about the History of Ukraine, 5th grade). Kyiv: Heneza, 2003 (5th grade).
- Vlasov, V., and O. Danilevs'ka. *Vstup do Istorii Ukrainy, 5 klas* (Introduction to the History of Ukraine). Kyiv: Abrys, 1999, 2002 (5th grade).
- Turchenko, F. H. *Novitnia Istoria Ukrainy: Chastyna Persha 1914–1939* (Modern History of Ukraine: Part one 1914–1939). Kyiv: Heneza, 1998, 2001, (10th grade).
- Kul'chytskyi, S. V., M. V. Koval', and Y. H. Lebedeva. *Istoriia Ukrainy* (History of Ukraine). Kyiv: Osvita, 1998 (10th grade).
- Kul'chytskyi, S. V., and Y. I. Shapoval. *Novitnia Istoriia Ukrainy (1914–1939)* (Modern History of Ukraine). Kyiv: Heneza, 2003 (10th grade).

²¹ Ibid., 79.

²² These books can be found on the list of approved textbooks for the 1996–97 school year. This list was published in *Informatsiyni Zbirnyk Ministerstva Osvity Ukrainy* (Collection of Information of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine) no. 12 (1996): 4–6.

²³ These books can be found on the list of approved textbooks for the 2004–05 school year. This list was published in *Osvita Ukrainy* (Education of Ukraine) no. 60–61 (2004): 15–18.

The Famine in Irish History Textbooks: The First Generation

The pre-independence education system of Ireland was characterized by strong church involvement, with the Catholic Church managing state-financed denominational schools and appointing teachers from the ranks of priests. After the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Professor Eoin MacNeill, the first Minister of Education, left this system largely untouched, in exchange for ecclesiastical consent for the Gaelicization of education, one of MacNeill's key priorities alongside equal opportunities.²⁴ Championed by the Gaelic League in the decades prior to independence, Gaelicization was seen as a prerequisite for the conservation and development of a distinct Irish national identity.²⁵ It had to 'redress the balance and to make compensation' for the neglect of Irish culture under the previous administration.²⁶ Although the Gaelicization campaign centred on the issue of the Irish language as a school subject and language of instruction, Irish history did not escape the attention of the educational authorities. History was made a compulsory subject for primary and secondary schools and by 1924 the government had prepared national history curricula that guided pupils to the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate (central exams for secondary education).²⁷ Central to the history course was Irish national history, which assumed a distinct nationalist flavour.²⁸ In the words of writer John Broderick:

The idea of history that we got was that we had been oppressed by our neighbours, the British, for seven hundred years; that the Catholic religion in particular had been suppressed and was persecuted; that there had been a great revival in the nineteenth century with Catholic Emancipation through Daniel O'Connell, and that Catholicism thrived under that, but that coming into the twentieth century we were being Englified and that was why 1916 came about; this had to be broken, the Irish people had to be shown what their heritage was. In a capsule this was the history of Ireland.²⁹

Educational officials instructed teachers to underline the continuity of the Irish separatist idea and highlight the ideals and deeds of national heroes and revolutionaries.³⁰

Contrary to what one might expect of a state giving high priority to nationalist history teaching, the Irish state did not intervene in the textbook writing, vetting and adoption process. Initially there was pressure on the Department of Education to

²⁴ Farren, Sean. *The Politics of Irish Education 1920–65*. Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1995; O'Donoghue, Thomas A. "Catholic Influence and the Secondary School Curriculum in Ireland, 1922–1962." *History of Education Review* 28 (1999): 16–29.

²⁵ Coolahan, John M. "A Study of Curricular Policy for the Primary and Secondary Schools of Ireland, 1900–1935, with Special Reference to the Irish Language and Irish History." Ph.D. diss., Trinity College Dublin, 1973.

²⁶ Quoted in Farren, *The Politics of Irish Education*, 107.

²⁷ Mulcahy, "A Study of the Relationship."

²⁸ Magee, John. "The Teaching of Irish History in Irish Schools." *The Northern Teacher* 10 (1970): 15–21.

²⁹ O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church*, 69.

³⁰ Foster, Robert. "History and the Irish Question." In *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism*, edited by C. Brady. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994.

establish a list of approved books but the government did not yield to this pressure as it feared the reaction of the commercial publishers.³¹ Textbook production was thus left completely to publishers, academics and history teachers. However, the lack of state involvement did not mean that textbooks presented accounts of history that were at odds with official views. To the contrary, according to Foster, the first generation of textbooks dutifully ‘memorialized’ the institutionalized view of history, a generation moreover that would continue to be used for the next 40 years.³²

Comparing these books on their representation of the Irish Famine it can be noted first of all that all five are highly critical of the response of the British government to the failure of the 1845 potato crop. The common tenor is that the government acted much too late with measures that were not effective initially. For this reason, the *Educational History* calls the story of the famine a story of ‘hunger, disease and *criminal mismanagement*’ (emphasis added).³³ The books are also unanimous in accusing British trade policy, which permitted an unrestrained outflow of grain and meat for export but imposed heavy duties on imported corn, of having seriously aggravated the famine. Carty is particularly condemning:

Before the Famine the British Government had been warned that the Irish people lived on the verge of starvation. They gave little heed to these warnings. In the first year of the Famine very little was done to relieve distress. Although the potato failed, there was abundance of food in the country.... But this food was sent out of Ireland while the people starved. All creeds and parties, Catholics and Protestants, Repealers and Unionists, advised the Government to close the ports, at least for a time. This was not done.... It was not until the Famine had been raging for nearly two years that effective measures were taken to save the people.³⁴

Moreover, both Carty and Gwynn argue that immediate action would have been taken if Ireland had had a government of its own. The latter adds that ‘no English Government would have dealt so with famine in England’, implying that the British government simply cared less about Ireland than England. Yet, the book also concedes ‘no native government could have prevented famine from following a loss of the potato crop’.³⁵ Another noteworthy detail is the identification of the British government as ‘the other’: both Gwynn and Hayden and Moonan refer to it as the ‘English’ government led by the ‘English’ Prime Minister, Lord John Russell.³⁶

These accounts, however, are offset by other narratives that dispel the impression that the five books present a one-sided nationalist account of the famine. Many extracts in the books, for instance, contradict a clear-cut view that sees relations between the English and Irish as purely antagonistic, with a ‘hostile other’—‘England’, the British government and the landlords—inflicting harm upon an

³¹ Doherty, Gabriel. “The Irish History Textbook, 1900–1960. Problems and Development.” *Oideas* 42 (1994): 5–25.

³² Foster, “History and the Irish Question”, 139.

³³ *The Educational History of Ireland*, 97.

³⁴ Carty, *A Junior History of Ireland*, 72, 73.

³⁵ Gwynn, *The Student’s History of Ireland*, 261.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 260, 261; Hayden & Moonan, *A Short History*, 496, 497.

'innocent us'—the Catholic Irish peasants. First, the books mention the substantial aid funds collected by private organizations in England, America and other countries once news of the disaster had poured in, although these charity efforts, so the books argue, were just a drop in the ocean and could not prevent the catastrophe from occurring. Second, the initial inaction of the British government is interpreted as irresponsible negligence driven by a faulty liberal ideology and insufficient knowledge of the Irish context rather than as a malicious policy of seeing as many Catholic Irish perish or emigrate as possible. Gwynn for instance points out that British politicians were deeply convinced of the correctness of a laissez-faire approach and 'counted it a crime for Government to do anything which could be done by private enterprise and private people'.³⁷ Or as Casserley puts it: 'The government was sympathetic, but it was not Irish; it knew little about Ireland, and understood nothing about the circumstances of the case'.³⁸ Moreover, Hayden and Moonan, Carty and Casserley underline that after the initial unsuccessful measures the British Government changed course and finally started implementing effective relief schemes that saved many lives. On the other hand, it is argued that many Irish and certainly those who fled Ireland in search for a better life in the Americas attributed more sinister intentions to the British government. Thus Gwynn states:

Above all, it was impossible for the Irish not to feel, in spite of all the charity which Englishmen and Englishwomen had shown, that England was glad to see the Catholic Irish leaving their country.³⁹

Similarly, in not exactly neutral terms, Hayden and Moonan say:

The Irish emigrants who, during the famine years, left their native land for America, carried to their new homes a bitter hatred of England, to whose prejudices, injustices, and, perhaps, deliberate malice and treachery, they ascribed their sufferings.⁴⁰

Most significantly, however, the books do not depict the landowning class consistently as the hostile Protestant English other. They could have easily done so given the fact that the overwhelming majority of the landlords were descendants of English Protestants who had obtained large tracts of Irish land during the Cromwellian confiscations and the years following William of Orange's victory in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Tellingly, the words 'Protestant', 'English' or 'foreign' are never used in combination with the word 'landlord'. In other words, the books do not see the events of the famine through the prism of an ethnic class struggle between the good Catholic peasant 'us' and the bad Protestant landlord 'them'. Furthermore, most books contend that there were good and bad landlords. Some, they argue, would do everything within their powers to relieve the misery of their tenants, even if this meant losing all their property, while others, mostly absentees, 'subscribed not a penny for

³⁷ Gwynn, *The Student's History of Ireland*, 261.

³⁸ Casserley, *History of Ireland*, 108.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁴⁰ Hayden and Moonan, *A Short History*, 499.

their relief, and merely grumbled that their rents were not remitted to them as usual'.⁴¹

In sum, the books argue that the initial stance of the British government seriously aggravated the Famine, but they refrain from attributing sole responsibility for the occurrence of the famine to the British government. This government is seen as 'the other' by some authors, indifferent to the plight of the Irish peasant as it refused to take immediate action after the outbreak of the potato disease. British rule in Ireland is seen as a negative phenomenon as a native government—it is argued—would have performed much better. Moreover, none of the books highlight internal differences within the ethnic Irish community, which suggests that all Irish were hit by the famine equally and that none profited from it. On the other hand, the landlords are not given an explicit ethnic label, nor are they unilaterally dismissed as ruthless exploiters of the tenants. Thus the narrative of the Famine presented by the first generation of textbooks does have a moderate nationalist colouring, but it never develops into a rancorous jingoism, as it neither accuses the 'opponent' of being ill-willed nor exploits all the available historical material to depict social relations in ethnic terms.

Educational Reform and the Second Generation of Textbooks

The end of the 1960s witnessed a major change in history education as a new generation of textbooks appeared that incorporated the tenets of a critical academic historiography. Developing since the 1940s, this 'revisionist' historiography exposed various popular accounts of key historical events as nationalist myths and endorsed the view that Irish history should be seen as 'a complex and ambivalent process rather than a morality tale'.⁴² Also the teaching of national history changed as contacts with colleagues and professionals abroad, enabled by the formation of the Irish branch of the European Association of Teachers in 1961, brought Irish history teachers in touch with new views on pedagogical objectives and historical narratives. According to Magee, these international exchanges played a key role in raising the awareness among Irish history teachers that other countries had progressed further in removing from school textbooks 'the distorted judgements and prejudices engendered by recent rivalries'.⁴³ The changes in history education mirrored wider transformations in education and society. Motivated by a desire to leave the era of economic stagnation and excessive emigration decidedly behind and meet the needs of Ireland's industrializing economy, the Fianna Fail governments of the 1960s introduced sweeping educational reforms geared towards greater provision of education at all levels, more equality of opportunity, more emphasis on vocational, technical and scientific training, and the establishment of a comprehensive curriculum.

Educational reform also had a profound effect on history education and textbooks. A study group set up by the Department of Education on the teaching of history in

⁴¹ Ibid., 498.

⁴² Foster, "History and the Irish Question," 140.

⁴³ Magee, "The Teaching of Irish History in Irish Schools," 17.

schools issued a report that marked a turning point in Irish education. The report highlighted the need for new textbooks 'attractively produced and illustrated, and free from the chauvinism and the selective treatment that had disfigured school histories from the establishment of the Irish Free State'.⁴⁴ More generally, the reforms heralded a sharp increase of state and parental involvement in education at the expense of the hitherto almighty Catholic Church. The church itself changed as well, moving from a conservative bastion strictly following the orders from the Vatican to an institution primarily concerned with the spiritual and psychological well-being of its adherents.⁴⁵ Hence, Ireland was far from immune to the social processes and movements that would so profoundly change the character of Western societies from the end of the 1960s onwards.

The new history textbooks of the late 1960s and early 1970s all echo the changes called for by the report. They differ from the older textbooks in a number of ways. The most notable difference concerns the initial response of the British government. In contrast to their predecessors, the new books state that the British government, headed by Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel in 1845, *did* take immediate action after the outbreak of the disease: 'Peel's relief measures ... were prompt, skilful, and on the whole successful'.⁴⁶ Yet, a new Whig government, the books argue, exchanged the interventionist course for a hands-off policy, in line with the prevailing laissez-faire ideology. The state refrained from the purchase and distribution of food, leaving these activities entirely to private enterprise and charity. It would only engage in public works, which were intended to give the poor and hungry an opportunity to work for the state and earn a modest salary. This new policy, the books explain, allowed matters to go from bad to worse so that in the end the government 'admitted defeat' by abandoning public works and extending direct relief.⁴⁷ Thus, much more so than their precursors, the books draw attention to the political processes operating in the imperial centre and try to make it understandable why the British government, the main 'other' from an Irish perspective, pursued the policies it did.

The second difference relates to the apportionment of blame for the Famine. Three of the four books explicitly state that it would not do justice to history to assign the sole responsibility for the disaster to the British government and the landlords, or worse to accuse them of deliberately creating the Famine to starve the Irish. Thus Tierney and MacCurtain write:

Those who sailed from Ireland brought with them a bitter hatred of England and the injustices of Irish landlords. They blamed the English government for the famine, even suggesting that the famine had been engineered by the government to reduce the population. They also maintained that there was sufficient food in the country to keep the Irish alive, but that it was exported by the heartless landlord and ruling classes.... It is true that there

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵ O'Donoghue, "Catholic Influence."

⁴⁶ Green, R. "The Great Famine (1845–50)." In *The Course of Irish History*, edited by T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin. Cork: Mercier Press, 1967: 268.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 270.

was food in Ireland during the famine, but whether it could have been used to save the situation as a whole is doubtful. Certainly there were very few mills in the country to process the grain, and fewer ovens in which to bake bread. The famine was caused by the almost total reliance on the potato. The blight was a natural one, and was not introduced into the country by the English.⁴⁸

Pursuing this argument, the new books contend that the famine was not caused by a single factor but by many. Contrary to the old books, they highlight the role of domestic circumstances. Thus, the habit of early marriage, the creation of large families, the subdivision of holdings into ever smaller patches of land and the lack of opportunities outside agriculture are all seen as having contributed to a growing population pressure on the land and to an excessive reliance on the potato as the primary food crop, thus preparing the way for the devastating impact of the potato blight in 1845 and the years thereafter. Perhaps because of the importance they attach to other than political factors, the books recoil from claiming that the famine would not have occurred if Ireland had had its own government.

In another and related contrast to their forerunners, the new books devote much more attention to the social, economic and cultural characteristics of Irish society during the famine, enabling the student to have a more inside look at the events of the time. Collins, for instance, zooms in on the public works and notes that the pay for labourers was insufficient to feed a family and was often delayed for several weeks. Similarly, Neill provides an extensive narrative on the workhouses. Not only does he inform the reader about the dire conditions in the overcrowded workhouses (no heating, poor food, diseases) but he also writes that the landlords and major farmers paid for their construction and operation, a fact not mentioned by the older textbooks. All seven new books, moreover, support their close examinations of Irish society with illustrations, excerpts from primary sources, tables, graphs and maps. Neill, for instance, uses a map on the intensity of the population decline after the famine to show how the disaster affected some regions much more than others.⁴⁹ In addition, three of the books end their section on the famine with exercises asking students to reflect on several primary sources and to imagine themselves as mid-nineteenth-century emigrants writing a letter to one's relations back home.

Clearly, therefore, the new books present a more balanced account of the Famine than their predecessors. Their main objectives seem to be to provide a sociological insight into the causes of the Famine and to stimulate student creativity rather than to inculcate a nationalist anti-English outlook and encourage the rote-learning of taken for granted knowledge. This is not to say that the books are not critical of the British government or the landlords. Tierney and MacCurtain for instance note concerning the latter:

Very few landlords considered it their duty to invest any money in improving the soil or encouraging their tenants to work their holdings in an enlightened way. The Irish landlords took their standards of living from their far richer English brethren and were for the

⁴⁸ Tierney and MacCurtain, *The Birth of Modern Ireland*, 59.

⁴⁹ Neill, *The Age of Steam and Steal*, 57.

most part living in debt. This led them to exact the last possible penny from their unfortunate tenants.⁵⁰

Yet when dealing with landlord–tenant relations the books are careful not to depict this issue in a one-sided ‘Irish/catholic good—English/Protestant bad’ fashion. Thus both Collins and Kirkpatrick remark that it was mostly Irishmen who profited from the bankruptcy of many landlords. By evicting many small farmers and cottiers, these new Irish landowners, they argue, were no less harsh on their tenants than their fore-runners:

Many hundreds of landlords had gone bankrupt during and after the famine and needed to sell their estates to pay of their debts.... The new owners were usually businessmen, often wealthy Dublin Catholics, who had little interest beyond making sure of getting the rent on time.⁵¹

The textbooks appearing in the 1980s and 1990s present historical accounts that are almost an exact copy of those of their immediate precursors. The only feature that distinguishes them from the generation of the 1960s and ’70s is the use of even more different visual aids to enliven the narrative. Thus Sobolewski and McDonald rely heavily on comics to tell the story of the Famine.⁵² They introduce a narrator in the shape of a comic figure to give critical comments on the events of the time. Similarly, Brockie and Walsh make use of new techniques like bullet points, eyewitness accounts, graphs, and a box with pictures and text showing contrasting conditions in England and Ireland.⁵³ Thus the youngest generation of textbooks is even more inspired by pupil-centred learning.

The Famine in Ukrainian History Textbooks

In Ukraine national renaissance was advocated by *Rukh*, a popular movement that united the fragmented opposition against the communist party in the late 1980s. As in Ireland, this national revival movement rose to prominence when the country was still part of the larger empire. In Ukraine, however, the period from the inception of the national movement to the establishment of independence was much shorter than in Ireland because Gorbachov’s *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, which had enabled *Rukh* to flourish, spun out of control so quickly that the Soviet Union broke up before *Rukh* could have developed into a coherent opposition movement. In fact, while the Baltic nations immediately seized upon the opportunities of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* by founding popular fronts as early as 1987, the conservative party leadership in Ukraine managed to keep reform at bay and to ignore critical voices until mid-1989. In August of that year, however, the Ukrainian party elite turned its back on Moscow, and

⁵⁰ Tierney and MacCurtain, *The Birth of Modern Ireland*, 54.

⁵¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Nineteenth Century*, 156.

⁵² Sobolewski and McDonald, *Let’s look at History Part 2*.

⁵³ Brockie and Walsh, *Focus on the Past*.

transformed itself overnight into 'true Ukrainian patriots' to ensure their political survival.⁵⁴ From that moment *Rukh* quickly gained mass support and became an influential political force, although it never became as popular as the national movements in the Baltics where Soviet rule had left fewer traces (in Ukraine the Russification of the native population had been much more pervasive than in the Baltics).

Nonetheless, undisturbed by the limited appeal of *Rukh* in the more populous and urbanized Russian-speaking South and East of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of the new republic, appointed many *Rukh* members to his government. Once in office these national activists energetically set about establishing and implementing a Ukrainian 'affirmative action' programme designed to undo Russification and make Ukrainian the sole language used in public domains. Although, as in Ireland, the emphasis was on language, national history followed closely in the hierarchy of priorities. In contrast to its Irish counterpart, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education assumed control not only over history curricula and examinations but also over the textbook production and adoption process and has continued to do so until the present. In cooperation with the National Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and private publishers and foundations, it organizes annual competitions for new textbooks. A jury composed of scholars and experts evaluates the books on readability, overall quality and correspondence to the curriculum plan. The books passing the competition are subsequently tried and tested in several school districts. Only after a successful probation period in schools do the books receive the approval of the Ministry of Education and will they be included on the list of officially recommended textbooks.⁵⁵ Schools are obliged to use the standard recommended textbooks but are free to use any kind of additional materials.

The Ministry split history education in schools into two subjects—History of Ukraine and World History. The institution of a separate course on national history is indicative of the importance assigned to the subject in promoting national identity. This is also underlined by statements in the curriculum plans for national history. The 1996 plan, for instance, asserts that one of the course's objectives is to 'educate pupils in a patriotic spirit so that they cultivate a love for their nation'.⁵⁶

The curriculum for History of Ukraine acquaints pupils with the Famine on two occasions in their school career, in the fifth grade when a bird's-eye view of national history is presented and in the tenth grade when the history of the first half of the

⁵⁴ Krylach, E., and S. Kul'chytskyi. "Die Diskussionen in der Ukraine über die Schulbücher zur Vaterländischen Geschichte." (The discussions in Ukraine about the Textbooks for National History). In *Auf den Kehrthausen der Geschichte? Der Umgang mit der Sozialistischen Vergangenheit*, edited by I. de Keghel and R. Maier. Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999.

⁵⁵ Popson, Nancy. "The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the Ukrainian Nation." *Nationalities Papers* 29 (2001): 325–50; see also Janmaat, Jan Germen. "Identity Construction and Education: The History of Ukraine in Soviet and Post-Soviet Schoolbooks." In *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine*, edited by T. Kuzio and P. D'Anieri. London: Praeger, 2002.

⁵⁶ *Prohramy dlia Sereidnoi Zahal'noosvitn'oi Shkoly: Istoriiia Ukrainy 5–11 Klasy; Vsesvitnia Istoriiia 6–11 Klasy*. (Programmes for Secondary Comprehensive Schools: History of Ukraine, grades 5–11; World History, grades 6–11). Kyiv: Perun, 1996: 9.

twentieth century is discussed. Given the direct political causes of the Ukrainian Famine one would expect the first post-independence textbook for the fifth grade to display a particularly one-sided and condemning account, but that is not quite the case. Thus it states:

The harvest of 1932 was not any less successful than those of the previous years. Hence there was no reason for the Famine. Stalin, however, wanted to accelerate industrialization—to build more factories and build them quicker. He needed a lot of money for that. Therefore it was decided to increase the sale of corn abroad and to get the corn from Ukrainian peasants at any price. At the same time Stalin expected that he could put the Ukrainian peasants, who had shown more resistance to collectivization than for instance the Russian peasantry, under heavy pressure with this measure. However, as the peasants made up a substantial part of the Ukrainian population, the Famine basically meant the starvation of the Ukrainian nation.⁵⁷

True, on the one hand the book contends that Stalin specifically attacked the Ukrainian peasantry with the Famine. One could argue that this constitutes a nationalist distortion as the Famine also claimed many victims in areas outside Ukraine, notably in the lower Volga and Kuban regions.⁵⁸ On the other hand the book does not argue that the Ukrainian *nation* was deliberately attacked by the Soviet regime. In fact, the book gives a meaningful explanation for the exceptional vigour of the collectivization campaign in Ukraine: the Ukrainian peasantry resisted collectivization more than the Russian peasantry. In addition it states that the policy of food confiscations was primarily motivated by Stalin's desire to industrialize the country. These remarks attenuate the impression that the Soviet regime was particularly hostile to the Ukrainians.

In 1994 two parallel textbooks for the tenth grade appeared, followed a year later by Russian translations for the (steadily decreasing number of) Russian schools in Ukraine. The first of these books, *Istoria Ukrainy* by Kul'chytskyi *et al.*, was still a trial version, the Ukrainian edition of which numbered 500,000 copies and the Russian one 300,000 copies.⁵⁹ The second book, *Noveishaia Istoriia Ukrainy* by Turchenko, was a genuine textbook of which more than one million copies were printed.⁶⁰ This book, which closely followed the curriculum, came to be the standard textbook used in schools.⁶¹ A comparison of the two books reveals that, despite presenting the same facts about the famine period, the latter presents a more radical interpretation of events than the former. This is first of all reflected in the terminology. Turchenko's text is littered with words carrying strong negative value judgements, all of which are used to characterize Stalin's regime. We read, for example, about the 'cruel crimes' of Stalinism, about 'cruel aggressors', the 'monstrous' scale of the Famine in Ukraine,

⁵⁷ Kucheruk, *Opovidannia z Istorii Ukrainy*, 186.

⁵⁸ Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*.

⁵⁹ Kul'chytskyi, Kurnosov and Koval', *Istoriia Ukrainy*.

⁶⁰ Turchenko, *Noveishaia Istoriia Ukrainy*. The title is given in a transcription from Russian as I read the Russian translation of the Ukrainian original. The same applies for Kul'chytskyi, Kurnosov and Koval', *Istoriia Ukrainy*.

⁶¹ Krylach and Kul'chytskyi, "Die Diskussionen in der Ukraine."

victims of the 'genocide' of 1932–33, and about a totalitarian regime 'terrorizing' the countryside.⁶² Kul'chytskyi *et al.* are equally condemning of Stalin's regime but refrain from using emotionally charged terms.

A second difference concerns the identification of the victims. Whereas Kul'chytskyi *et al.* argue that the collectivization campaign and the confiscations of food were aimed solely at the peasants—'In reality however these activities were consciously geared towards the slow physical annihilation of peasant families'⁶³—Turchenko tends to extend victimhood to the whole Ukrainian nation. Thus he opens his account of the Famine with the following statement: 'One of the most cruel crimes committed by Stalinism against the Ukrainian nation was the Famine of 1932–1933.'⁶⁴ In the concluding paragraph he writes:

The Tragedy of 1932–33 decisively crushed the resistance against the Kolchoz-feudal system and essentially blew up the forces that stood up for the vexed national rights. This is precisely what the totalitarian regime aimed for, what its representatives in Ukraine cynically discussed.⁶⁵

These extracts leave the impression that the rest of the Ukrainian nation was as much assailed by the Soviet authorities as the peasants resisting collectivization. Although Turchenko acknowledges that regions with an intensive agriculture outside Ukraine, such as the North Caucasus, the Kuban, the lower Volga and North Kazakhstan, also suffered greatly from the Famine, he claims that it assumed 'the most monstrous proportions' in Ukraine.⁶⁶ In fact, the radical tone of Turchenko's book extends to other topics. Thus its account of the Second World War offended many left-wing deputies in the Ukrainian parliament, who felt that the book's portrayal of Ukraine as a neutral victim of both warring parties in the Second World War, as suffering from both Nazi terror and the re-institution of the 'Stalinist totalitarian regime', was a serious misrepresentation of reality.⁶⁷

Another conspicuous contrast between Kul'chytskyi *et al.* and Turchenko concerns the achievements of collectivized agriculture in the years following the Famine. Whereas the former presents a predominantly upbeat account of the initial results of the Kolkhozes and Sovkhozes, the latter mentions only negative consequences of the collectivization. Thus, Kul'chitskii *et al.* argue that because of improvements in the organizational structure and in the technological and mechanical support the collective farms managed quickly to overcome the food crisis (they substantiate this claim by showing how the harvest of corn rose from 317 million 'pud' in 1933—one pud is 16.38 kg—to 496 million pud in 1937). In addition they state that the collective farms started diversifying their agricultural activities and that the Kolkhozniki (workers on

⁶² Turchenko, *Noveishaia Istoria Ukrainy*, 225–28.

⁶³ Kul'chytskyi, Kurnosov and Koval, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 194.

⁶⁴ Turchenko, *Noveishaia Istoria Ukrainy*, 225.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Krylach and Kul'chytskyi, "Die Diskussionen in der Ukraine." For the quotation see Turchenko, *Noveishaia Istoriia Ukrainy*, 310.

Kolkhozes) were granted interest-free credits for the purchase of cattle.⁶⁸ For Turchenko collectivization brought nothing but misery. He contends that ‘the forced labour’ [in collective farms, JGJ] was not very effective, that the Kolkhozniki were paid ‘appallingly low’ prices for their produce and that due to the collectivization drive the peasantry lost its ‘entrepreneurial spirit, individualism and work ethos’, held to be its most valuable character traits.⁶⁹

This brief review of the first generation of textbooks tells us that despite the unanimous strong condemnation of the role of the Soviet regime in the unfolding of the Famine, there are considerable differences between the textbooks in tone and—to a lesser extent—selection of events. The books further do not claim that Stalin specifically targeted the Ukrainian nation with the Famine, although Turchenko, the most influential textbook of the three, is more ambiguous on this issue. Moreover, none of them engages in ethnic stereotyping as the Soviet government and the officials responsible for the collectivization programme in Ukraine are not marked as Russians or Jews. Thus, the conclusion seems warranted that the books have not exploited the available historical material for nationalist purposes to the fullest extent. Yet, the downside of not addressing ethnic differences is that the books do not provide anecdotes that would present Ukrainians in an unfavourable light. Thus the participation of many ethnic Ukrainians in the grain-requisition bands that pillaged the countryside⁷⁰ is an unpleasant fact not mentioned by any of the textbooks. This leaves the impression that ethnic Ukrainians were only victims of the collectivization campaign.

In 1994 President Kravchuk had to make way for Leonid Kuchma, a Russian-speaking Ukrainian from Dnipropetrovsk, who advocated closer ties with Russia and favoured granting Russian official status. However, once in power, Kuchma failed to keep his promise to lift the status of Russian. The officials appointed by him, such as the education ministers Zgurovskyi and Kremen’, consolidated the cultural policies established by the previous administration. This change of form but not of content is by and large reflected in the textbooks. Thus, the newest book for the fifth grade written by Misan presents an account of the Famine which is almost similar to that of Kucheruk.⁷¹ It also mentions the reluctance of the Ukrainian peasantry to enter the collective farms and the reasons Stalin had for pursuing the collectivization of agriculture (‘the construction of new factories, power plants and dwellings’).⁷² Remarkably, another book for the fifth grade (Vlasov and Danilevska 1999), published some years earlier, is more radical in tone. It makes extensive use of the strong normative terminology so often found in nationalist narratives and does not address the main reason for the regime to undertake collectivization.⁷³ It also fails to mention that the famine

⁶⁸ Kul’chytskyi, Kurnosov and Koval’, *Istoriia Ukrainy*, 255.

⁶⁹ Turchenko, *Noveishaia Istoriia Ukrainy*, 230.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*.

⁷¹ Misan, *Opovidannia z Istoriia Ukrainy*.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 170.

⁷³ Vlasov and Danilevska, *Vstup do Istorii Ukrainy*.

occurred in other areas of the Soviet Union as well. Moreover, it seems dangerously close to supporting the view that the Famine was as much directed at the Ukrainian nation as at the peasantry. The book for instance states:

The second half of the 1920s saw the beginning of the violent establishment of collective enterprises—Kolkhozes. The land, horses, cattle and working tools were taken from the farmers by means of force.... Having been [independent, JGJ] corn-growers for generations, they became tenants without rights—Kolkhozniki.... To resolutely break the resistance of the Ukrainian corn-growers the Bolshevik leaders in Moscow decided to organize a deliberate Famine.... Simultaneously with the extermination of the Ukrainian peasantry, the Bolshevik government started waging a war against Ukrainian education, academia and art.⁷⁴

The textbooks for the tenth grade did not change much in content either. The later editions of Turchenko, for instance, contain only marginal alterations.⁷⁵ They lost some of the most controversial terms—we do not see the word ‘genocide’ anymore—and include an acknowledgement that the government offered some help to the peasantry in the late spring of 1933, but in all other respects their accounts of the Famine are an exact copy of that of its predecessor. The new editions of Kul’chitskii do contain some noteworthy changes compared with their forerunner.⁷⁶ Although the content mostly stayed the same, the form of the narrative is different with less text and the inclusion of several pieces of documentary evidence and a map showing the regional variations in intensity of the Famine. Students, moreover, are asked to draw their own conclusions from the presented documents. These modifications in form could be an indication that pedagogical motivations (readability, developing interpretation and presentation skills) are becoming more important than nation-building objectives.

Change might indeed be in the air as the Ministry of Education recently approved a supplementary book for the tenth grade that was prepared by the all-Ukrainian association of history teachers Nova Doba in cooperation with the European Standing Conference of History Teachers’ Associations (Euroclio), and many Ukrainian and Western experts.⁷⁷ This book closely resembles Western textbooks in approach and teaching method as it presents a variety of historical sources and encourages pupils to work independently and make their own inferences from the material presented.

Discussion

The analysis of textbooks has shown that Ireland started out with moderately nationalist accounts of the Famine and has exchanged these for balanced narratives since

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1999, 234, 235.

⁷⁵ Turchenko, *Novitnia Istoria Ukrainy*.

⁷⁶ Kul’chytskyi, Koval’ and Lebedeva, *Istoriia Ukrainy*; Kul’chytskyi and Shapoval, *Novitnia Istoriia Ukrainy*.

⁷⁷ Komarov, Y., V. Mysan, A. Osmolovs’kyi, S. Bilonozhko, and O. Zaitsev. *Istoriia Epokhy Ochyma Liudyny: Ukraina ta Evropa y 1900–1939 Rokakh, 10 Klas*. Kyiv: Heneza, 2004. This book is included in the list of textbooks and supplementary books for the 2004–05 school year. See *Osvita Ukrainy* (note 23).

the end of the 1960s. Educational reform, contacts with history teachers abroad, the loss of influence of the Catholic Church, and the appearance of a generation of critically minded historians have all contributed to this change. The textbooks appearing from the 1960s not only have more balanced accounts of the Famine but also highlight socioeconomic themes and micro-histories and present the material in a more diverse manner, inviting pupils to work independently with the textbooks. They thus reflect a shift away from rote learning and the cultivation of an Irish national consciousness as pedagogical objectives to fostering broad sociological understanding, critical thinking skills and an attitude of independent enquiry. The Irish pattern of textbook narratives clearly lends support to Kuzio's developmental perspective. As noted above, this perspective expected neutral historiography to gradually replace nationalistically inspired narratives as part of a change from ethnic to civic nations in young states growing to maturity and consolidating democratic structures.

Unsurprisingly, the Ukrainian textbooks are highly disapproving of the policy of the Soviet government during the years of the Famine. They all highlight the many deaths from starvation in the countryside and argue that the government consciously used a policy of famine to crush the resistance of the peasantry to the collectivization of agriculture. Ukrainians are only portrayed as victims of the Famine: the participation of ethnic Ukrainians in the food confiscation brigades is omitted. Nonetheless, the variation among textbooks in tone and content is conspicuous. Whereas some follow the (emerging) international historical consensus closely, others are much more radical in the selection and interpretation of materials, and hence can be said to display several nationalist distortions. The most influential textbook (written by Turchenko for the 10th grade) falls into the last category. It contrasts sharply with its main competitor (the 10th grade textbook written by Kul'chytski *et al.*) in the account of the famine and of the first results of the collectivized system.

This variation in Ukrainian textbook narratives is difficult for the three perspectives on nationalist historiography to explain. It certainly does not support the post-communist perspective, which expected to see a uniform nationalist account of the Famine replacing an equally uniform but ideologically different Soviet account. Paradoxically, while the Ukrainian state exerts more control over the textbook production and dissemination process than the early Irish state did, the Ukrainian textbooks are at least as varied in tone and content as their Irish counterparts in the 1920s and 1930s. State supervision thus need not stand in the way of a variety of opinions. Possibly, state control of textbooks is more token than real given that the textbook review and selection process is mostly undertaken by peers (academics and teachers) and not by civil servants from the Department of Education.

The finding that the Ukrainian textbook narratives are in fact quite varied is of great significance. It indicates that a monolithic politicized historiography is not automatically replaced by an equally intolerant nationalist discourse in young states emerging from a period of authoritarian rule, contrary to the expectation of leading theories. This conclusion is still tentative, however, as many other topics and other countries need to be drawn into the comparison to arrive at a more finite judgement. In this regard it is interesting to briefly review textbook issues in other post-Soviet states to

assess whether Ukraine is the exception confirming the rule or whether other post-Soviet states also show a diversity of textbook narratives.

To begin with Kazakhstan, Kissane has described how the post-Soviet government has seized on history education to promote a de-Sovietized Kazakh ethno-national identity. After independence it instituted a separate national history course for which it ordered new textbooks to be written. These textbooks paint Russian–Kazakh relations in antagonistic terms: Russia is depicted as a hostile neighbour that violently incorporated Kazakhstan in the nineteenth century to exploit it as a colony. However, the new programme for the course of World History, issued in 2000, counter-balances the ethno-nationalism of these textbooks by adopting a multi-ethnic approach that sees Russian–Kazakh relations in a more positive light. Nonetheless, as of 1999, schools were no longer permitted to use textbooks for World History published outside Kazakhstan, which sharply reduced options for teachers to acquaint themselves and their pupils with different perspectives.⁷⁸

In Russia history education is no longer as monolithic as it used to be either. Maier recounts how a fierce battle erupted in the mid-1990s between reform-minded historians who sought to challenge nationalist myths in Russia's history and practitioners and politicians who held more traditional views. Interestingly, he mentions the example of a modern textbook endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Education that was blacklisted by the Duma of the Voronezh region. The deputies of this local parliament believed that the book, which was partly financed by the Soros Foundation, 'undermined the dignity of the "fatherland's" history and culture' and was a conscious attempt by foreign agents to poison the minds of innocent Russian children.⁷⁹

Moldova presents another case of a post-Soviet state where different interpretations and approaches to the past coexist in an uneasy manner. The controversy in this country concerns the recent attempt by the communist government to replace the two courses of *History of the Romanians* and *World History* by the single course *Integrated History*, which combines national and international history. This initiative was welcomed by the Council of Europe, Euroclio and Western scholars who had criticized the *History of Romanians* course and its textbooks for having a pro-Romanian bias that excludes the country's minorities. However, at the grassroots level ethnic Romanian teachers and parents rejected the new course, which they saw as a shrewd and covert manoeuvre by the government to re-Sovietize and de-nationalize the Romanian Moldovans.⁸⁰

These examples show that a diversity of historical interpretations is not just confined to Ukraine among the post-Soviet states. However, it is doubtful whether

⁷⁸ Kissane, Carolyn. "History Education in Transit: Where to for Kazakhstan?" *Comparative Education* 41 (2005): 45–69.

⁷⁹ Maier, Robert. "Learning about Europe and the World: Schools, Teachers, and Textbooks in Russia after 1991." In *The Nation, Europe, and the World: Textbooks and Curricula in Transition*, edited by H. Schissler and Y. N. Soysal. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005: 144.

⁸⁰ Anderson, Elizabeth A. "Backwards, Forwards, or Both? Moldovan Teachers' Relationships to the State and the Nation." *European Education* 37 (2005): No. 3, 53–67.

this diversity also reflects a conviction that diverging historical views are part of a democratic society and therefore deserve respect. Judging from the eruptions of anger following textbook reform and from the attempts at both central and local levels to censor unwanted interpretations, the emerging pluralism of historical thought may well be fledgling and temporary. It remains to be seen, for instance, whether the current Russian government, which has declared patriotic education a key priority,⁸¹ is as committed to a diversity of opinions as the government of the mid-1990s was when Maier carried out his study. Moreover, Ukraine and the other three countries examined are relatively open post-Soviet societies. It is unlikely that the authoritarian regimes of Belarus and Turkmenistan are permitting a diversity of historical views.

This brings us back to textbook developments in Ukraine. As noted before, a supplementary book has recently appeared that echoed Western books in pedagogical approach. Tellingly, this book resulted from a cooperation project between the Ukrainian Association of History Teachers and Euroclio. A clear parallel can be drawn here with the Irish context where contacts with history teachers abroad have also marked the beginning of new approaches in teaching aids and materials. International contacts are thus important for the incorporation of new views and approaches. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine pluralist even-handed histories, which by necessity are the product of discussions with peers abroad, being written in an isolated society ruled by an (authoritarian) regime fearful of foreign influences that might undermine its hold on power. In this regard, it can be expected that history textbook writing in Ukraine will increasingly open up to the outside world after a pro-Western reform-minded government came to power following the turbulent presidential elections in December 2004, provided this government remains committed to democracy, freedom of speech and the rule of law.

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⁸¹ Piattoeva, Nelli. "Citizenship education as an expression of democratisation and nation-building processes in Russia." *European Education* 37, (2005): No. 3, 38–52.